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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001370

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: IRANIAN WEAPONS IN AFGHANISTAN: MFA ASKS TO KEEP
UNDER WRAPS

REF: A. KABUL 1167

[1](#)B. KABUL 1327

Classified By: DCM Richard Norland for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) wants to keep the issue of the Iranian-made weapons recently found in Kandahar under the radar screen in the lead up to the June visit of the Iranian President to Afghanistan. According to the MFA, President Karzai supports the plan to avoid additional friction with Afghanistan's neighbors and to issue no official public statements on the incident. (This more moderate tone came across in Karzai's meeting with CJCS General Pace and Ambassador Wood on April 21 - septel). The MFA is asking its international partners to do the same. Looking beyond the weapons issue, the MFA is aiming to construct a U.S.-Afghan "framework" for managing relations with Iran, to be discussed during the proposed meeting between Secretary Rice and Spanta (date TBD). The MFA has asked the Defense Ministry to determine the manufacturing date of the weapons to see if they might be from a different period when Iran was regularly supplying the Mujahedin. END SUMMARY

Keep Munitions Issue Out of the Public

[1](#)2. (C) Foreign Minister Spanta's Senior Advisor, David Moradian, called Deputy Political Counselor to MFA April 19 to discuss Afghanistan's and the international community's response to the recent discovery of Iranian weapons in Afghanistan. Moradian asked that the international community refrain from public comments on the issue. He said the GOA planned to issue no official public statement. Its message to Iran would be the following: "Afghanistan has been grateful for the responsible behavior of the Iranian government. The GOA knows some elements in Iran are opposed

to official Iranian government policy. Afghanistan asks that the GOI rein in those rogue elements. Afghanistan is giving Iran the benefit of the doubt regarding Iranian-made weapons found in Afghanistan." Moradian requested that its international partners convey similar messages to Iran. He asked for U.S. support for this approach. The MFA has already approached the UK with this request and plans to meet with UNSRSG Koenigs, the EU, and NATO.

13. (C) Moradian reported that, in Spanta's absence (he is on leave in Turkey), the Deputy Foreign Minister recently met with President Karzai who supported this basic approach as he wants to keep irritants with Iran below the radar screen in the lead up to the Iranian President's June visit to Afghanistan. He explained that Afghanistan wants to avoid a crisis with Iran as it already had so many problems with Pakistan, the Taliban, drugs, and corruption. Moradian stressed that the Afghan public needed to see that relations with Afghanistan's neighbors were under control.

14. (C) Asked why Iran would be supporting the Taliban, Moradian answered that while Iran supported the National Front, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Council had been re-establishing ties to the Taliban. "In fact, they never severed their ties, this is a fact," Moradian emphasized. He said different factions in Iran were pursuing different agendas. Iran saw both the rise of the Taliban and the presence of the U.S. as threats. Moradian judged that some in Iran were trying to demonstrate to the U.S. Iran's deterrent power through support for the Taliban. Iran was using different means for different objectives, said Moradian.

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Need to Verify Age of Munitions

15. (C) Moradian said the MFA had asked MOD to verify the date the munitions were manufactured. He noted that Iran had been supplying light weapons to the Mujahedin for years, so the munitions could possibly have been from an earlier period. If the munitions were recently manufactured, he said, then it would have different, more serious implications. (Note: The assessment from ISAF is that these weapons were of recent manufacture.)

U.S. and GOA Need Agreement on Dealing with Iran

16. (C) Moradian suggested that the proposed meeting between Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Spanta be used to discuss

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how our two countries should deal with the Iranian presence in Afghanistan (Note: MFA is exploring dates in June for a Spanta visit to the U.S. End Note). He reported that Spanta hoped that we could agree on a U.S.-Afghan "framework" for managing relations with Iran but recognized this would "require lots of preparation and patience." Spanta has regularly voiced concerns that Afghanistan not get caught in the middle of U.S.-Iranian disagreements.

"GOA Is Fragmented, Beware of Misinformation"

17. (C) Moradian volunteered the warning that different Ministries and political groupings had different loyalties and, as a result, the GOA was extremely fragmented and politicized. He cautioned against accepting at face value what other Ministries told the U.S. In particular, he asserted the National Directorate for Security (NDS) was plagued by different internal groups. He described, for example, that one group within NDS was anti-Iran but pro-Pakistan, while another was pro-Pakistan but anti-Iran. He characterized NDS officials as prone to mislead the U.S.

depending on their group allegiances. Unlike the MFA which lacked an ideological history, NDS and other officials showed no sense of serving the national interest, he claimed.

Comment

18. (C) As post has reported (reftels), the GOA is keen on maintaining normal bilateral relations with both the U.S. and Iran. FM Spanta's desire to downplay confrontation with Iran if possible appears to be having an impact on Karzai's own thinking, as reflected in the meeting with General Pace (septel). The MFA's call for a U.S.-Afghan framework for dealing with Iran may be a sign of growing fears that Afghanistan is increasingly getting caught in the middle of U.S.-Iranian differences. Although Moradian has a different style from his boss (and neither is a seasoned diplomat), he is a close advisor to the Foreign Minister, enjoys his full confidence, and reflects his thinking on relations with Iran.

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